

Martin, C.J., Platt, S.D., Hunt, S.M. "Housing conditions and ill health" British Medical Journal 294:1125-1127, 1987.

ABSTRACT: Lack of empirical evidence that living in damp houses has detrimental effects on health may partly be due to inadequate research. A preliminary study was therefore carried out of a random sample of council owned residences in a deprived area of Edinburgh, a respondent from consenting households being interviewed to obtain a profile of the physical and mental health of all adults and children. In addition, information was gathered about other factors that might be important, particularly smoking and selective bias in the allocation of tenants to houses. Independent measures of dampness were made by environmental health officers.

No conclusive effects of damp on the health of adults were identified. Nevertheless, children living in damp houses, especially where fungal mould was present, had higher rates of respiratory symptoms, which were unrelated to smoking in the household, and higher rates of symptoms of infection and stress.

Housing should remain an important public health issue, and the effects of damp warrant further investigation.

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